

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **Oakfield College**

**17 December 2002**



ADULT LEARNING  
INSPECTORATE

## Grading

Inspectors use a seven-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of learning sessions. The descriptors for the seven grades are:

- *grade 1 - excellent*
- *grade 2 - very good*
- *grade 3 - good*
- *grade 4 - satisfactory*
- *grade 5 - unsatisfactory*
- *grade 6 - poor*
- *grade 7 - very poor.*

Inspectors use a five-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of provision in occupational/curriculum areas and Jobcentre Plus programmes. The same scale is used to describe the quality of leadership and management, which includes quality assurance and equality of opportunity. The descriptors for the five grades are:

- *grade 1 - outstanding*
- *grade 2 - good*
- *grade 3 - satisfactory*
- *grade 4 - unsatisfactory*
- *grade 5 - very weak.*

The two grading scales relate to each other as follows:

SEVEN-POINT SCALE	FIVE-POINT SCALE
grade 1	grade 1
grade 2	
grade 3	grade 2
grade 4	grade 3
grade 5	grade 4
grade 6	grade 5
grade 7	

## Adult Learning Inspectorate

The Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) was established under the provisions of the *Learning and Skills Act 2000* to bring the inspection of all aspects of adult learning and work-based training within the remit of a single inspectorate. The ALI is responsible for inspecting a wide range of government-funded learning, including:

- work-based training for all people over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- **learnirect** provision
- Adult and Community Learning
- training funded by Jobcentre Plus
- education and training in prisons, at the invitation of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons.

Inspections are carried out in accordance with the *Common Inspection Framework* by teams of full-time inspectors and part-time associate inspectors who have knowledge of, and experience in, the work which they inspect. All providers are invited to nominate a senior member of their staff to participate in the inspection as a team member.

## Overall judgement

In those cases where the overall judgement is that the provision is adequate, only those aspects of the provision which are less than satisfactory will be reinspected.

Provision will normally be deemed to be inadequate where:

- more than one third of published grades for occupational/curriculum areas, or
- leadership and management are judged to be less than satisfactory

This provision will be subject to a full reinspection.

The final decision as to whether the provision is inadequate rests with the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning. A statement as to whether the provision is adequate or not is included in the summary section of the inspection report.



## SUMMARY

### The provider

Oakfield College is part of Trinity School which specialises in the provision of education for young people with emotional, social and behavioural difficulties as part of the local education authority in Newcastle upon Tyne. There are currently 22 learners on Life Skills training programmes operated through two parallel programmes known as Oakfield Training and the West End Training Agency

### Overall judgement

The quality of the provision is not adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. More specifically, the Life Skills training is unsatisfactory. Leadership and management, equality of opportunity and quality assurance are also unsatisfactory.

### GRADES

Leadership and management	4
Contributory grades:	
Equality of opportunity	4
Quality assurance	4

Foundation programmes	4
Contributory grades:	
Life Skills	4

### KEY STRENGTHS

- effective partnership arrangements
- good internal and external communications
- good retention rates
- good pastoral support for learners

### KEY WEAKNESSES

- poor business planning
- limited awareness of equality of opportunity
- inadequate quality assurance arrangements
- inadequate assessment

## OAKFIELD COLLEGE

- poor planning of learning

## **OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

- more accreditation of learning

## THE INSPECTION

1. A team of two inspectors spent a total of six days with Oakfield College (Oakfield) in December 2002. They interviewed 16 learners and one employer at a work placement. Inspectors carried out 10 interviews with managers and staff of Oakfield and made seven visits to subcontractors. They examined 13 portfolios of evidence, 12 individual learning plans, as well as other documents related to the management of Oakfield. Inspectors examined data on learners' retention and achievement rates. Two learning sessions were observed. They also reviewed the company's self-assessment report and development plan, which were produced in August 2002.

Grades awarded to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Foundation programmes	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>

## THE PROVIDER AS A WHOLE

### Context

2. Oakfield College acts as a managing agent for Oakfield Training and West End Training Agency, based in Newcastle-upon-Tyne in the northeast of England. Oakfield Training was established as a function of Oakfield College in 1990. Its current focus is the provision of work-based learning programmes in relation to motor vehicles. West End Training Agency (WETA) was developed from October 2001 to expand the range of occupational areas available to learners, currently comprising Life Skills training programmes tailored to the music industry, construction, parks and countryside, sport and leisure and independent living. Most of WETA's provision is provided by subcontractors. The main agencies that are subcontracted manage the learning programmes and provide most of the training. WETA also subcontracts with other support agencies that can provide additional support and learning opportunities to enhance the main learning provision. Oakfield College is part of Trinity School which provides specialist education for children with emotional, behavioural and social difficulties as part of Newcastle City Council's local education authority (LEA). Oakfield College employs seven staff who are involved in the work-based learning programmes for 22 learners on foundation programmes. Work-based learning is funded through a contract with Tyne and Wear Learning and Skills Council (LSC).

3. Newcastle-upon-Tyne is located in the northeast of England. In May 2000, the unemployment rates in Newcastle-upon-Tyne and Tyne and Wear were 4 per cent and 5.2 per cent respectively, compared with the national average 3 per cent. The proportion of people from minority ethnic groups in Newcastle-upon-Tyne and Tyne and wear is 4.1 per cent and 1.8 per cent respectively, compared with the national average of 6.2 per cent. In 2001, the proportion of school leavers in Newcastle-upon-Tyne and Tyne and Wear achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above was 36.7 per cent and 42 per cent, respectively, compared with the national average of 47.9 per cent. Currently, 67 per cent of school leavers in Newcastle-upon-Tyne stay on in full-time education or enter training, compared with 71 per cent in England.

### Life Skills

4. Retention rates are good and the number of learners recruited onto the training programmes has increased by approximately 60 per cent since 2001-02. Staff provide learners with good individual pastoral support. A good range of learning activities is provided which are well matched to learners' needs. There are insufficient links between vocational training, and literacy and numeracy support, with the vocational training provided separate to the literacy and numeracy training. Assessment is inadequate. The planning of learning is poor.



## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

## Grade 4

5. Oakfield is part of Trinity School, managed by a board of governors who report to the LEA. The contract for work-based learning is held by Oakfield College, and is managed by the head teacher. Work-based learning programmes are provided through two parallel training programmes operated as Oakfield Training and WETA. The management of Oakfield Training and WETA is delegated to the post-16 manager, assisted by the project development manager. The post-16 manager has specific responsibility for quality assurance. There is an equal opportunities policy and a quality assurance policy which cover work-based learning. The progressions officer is responsible for equal opportunities issues. Four staff are employed to provide Life Skills training programmes. Oakfield College produced its first self-assessment report in August 2002.

### STRENGTHS

- effective partnership arrangements
- good internal and external communications

### WEAKNESSES

- poor business planning
- no staff appraisal process
- ineffective management information systems
- poor awareness of equality of opportunity by staff and learners
- inadequate strategies to target under-represented groups
- inadequate quality assurance arrangements

### OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better minuting of decisions and agreed actions from meetings

6. Partnership arrangements are effective. Oakfield has good links and networking arrangements with a wide range of external organisations. There are close links with the Trinity schools, and effective working relationships with the local LSC, Connexions and the local authority. The range of employers and subcontracted Life Skills providers that Oakfield works with, is carefully matched to the wide range of needs and abilities of learners. Subcontractors represent a wide range of Life Skills providers to extend the range of provision and improve the learning opportunities available to learners. There is a good mix of vocational areas, including sport, parks and countryside, recording studios, construction, and independent living. Oakfield bids for some projects and initiatives such as a motorcycle training course with external funding. There are no working partnerships with specific groups in relation to minority ethnic learners.

7. Internal and external communications are good. Oakfield has good communication with subcontractors and employers, and communications within the organisation are also good. There are good working relationships with employers and subcontractors and communication is regular. A support pack for subcontractors has recently been introduced to ensure consistency in relation to quality assurance arrangements. Subcontractors' health and safety policies are monitored and appropriate service level agreements are in place. There are regular formal meetings with subcontractors to discuss ways to improve provision. Telephone contact is frequent and there are regular visits by Oakfield staff to work placements and the subcontracted Life Skills providers. Staff discussions are not always recorded. Some of the formal meetings are minuted, although actions are not always clearly identified or followed through. There is not enough formal recording of decision-making. Staff are well informed about the organisation's activities and understand their role in the organisation. The management style is open and staff have a detailed knowledge of the learners and their needs. Managers and staff work well together to deal with issues relating to learners and the training provision.

8. Business planning is poor. The current business plan is the first developed by Oakfield. It is incomplete and it is not detailed enough to improve and develop the provision. It does not identify how objectives will be achieved. There is no financial planning. There is no way to assess whether objectives are achievable or affordable. Staff, employers and subcontractors are not involved in developing the business plan. The business plan is separate from the self-assessment report and the development plan. The planning processes are generally poorly co-ordinated. There is no link between the business plan and staff training.

9. There is no staff appraisal process. The post-16 manager is responsible for the implementation of a staff appraisal process in 2003, but has not received relevant training. Staff have not had training in the proposed appraisal process. Some appropriate staff development and training has taken place, but this is agreed informally and is not related to the business plan. In some cases, the training is linked to job roles. There is no budget identified for staff development and no system for setting targets for staff relating to work-based learning and the Life Skills training programme. There is not enough equal opportunities training. A mentoring system for new and less-experienced staff has recently been introduced.

10. Management information systems are ineffective. Records and information relating to work-based learning and the organisation are recorded manually. The focus is largely on providing management information relating to claims or for financial purposes. The use of management information is mainly to monitor contract compliance. There is poor use of benchmarking in relation to other Life Skills providers. There is no systematic analysis of reliable performance data to contribute to management decisions or improvement strategies within the organisation. Data relating to equality of opportunity are not analysed and there is no analysis of the learner's profile in relation to additional learning and support needs. Staff and managers have only recently

developed access to information technology (IT) equipment and the Internet. This is not yet fully operational. There are plans to adopt the local authority schools information management system in 2003. Administration support is in place to deal with this development and the training required has been identified.

## **Equality of opportunity**

## **Contributory grade 4**

11. There is an equal opportunities policy and a complaints and anti-harassment policy. However, staff and learners have a poor awareness of equality of opportunity. Learners do not fully remember topics discussed during equal opportunities training at induction. There is no reinforcement of these subjects during progress reviews. There is no systematic planning of equal opportunities training throughout the Life Skills training programmes. Sessions on drug awareness are provided. Staff do not fully understand the wider issues relating to equality of opportunity, which are not covered adequately at staff induction. One member of staff recruited recently was given the staff handbook to read rather than any systematic training. There is no planned staff development programme in equal opportunities. One member of staff has recently been given the responsibility of taking equality of opportunity forward in a more systematic way, but this has had no impact yet. Staff do not discuss equal opportunities issues with learners. Oakfield is covered by the Newcastle City Council equal opportunities policy and a new statement has recently been put in place to refer directly to Oakfield's staff and learners. This is very new and has not been circulated to all staff.

12. Strategies to target under-represented groups are inadequate. Of the current 22 learners, 20 are men and two are women. There are no learners from minority ethnic groups. There are no general promotional leaflets or brochures about the provision. There is no marketing of the provision to under-represented groups. No attempt has been made to produce information in any other language other than English. There is not enough analysis of data to help develop strategies to attract learners from under-represented groups. Some efforts have been made to link with partner agencies in the area who specialise in working with women and minority ethnic groups. Oakfield does target learners from disadvantaged areas who have problems such as homelessness, criminal backgrounds, learning difficulties and poor health. Data on these issues are not kept and no analysis within the target group is carried out. There are plans to hold recruitment events at Oakfield's premises, which will include some targeting of under-represented learners. Access to premises is satisfactory for those with restricted mobility.

**Quality assurance****Contributory grade 4**

13. Quality assurance arrangements are inadequate. There is no systematic evaluation of training. No observation of training takes place at Oakfield or at the subcontractors. Some subcontractors have their own, effective quality assurance arrangements in place, but Oakfield has no detailed knowledge of how monitoring is carried out and are not actively involved in sharing best practice with those who have more established arrangements in place. There is no verification of learners' achievement. Most of the learning is not accredited by any external organisations. There is insufficient verification of the decisions of trainers directly involved in the training and assessment. No formal feedback mechanisms are in place to systematically evaluate the experience of learners, employers or subcontractors in order to continuously improve the learning experience. A new quality assurance process and associated procedures has recently been created and related documentation is being introduced. External help was used to develop the new quality assurance framework and work is continuing to ensure effective implementation. Although much work has been carried out recently, it is too early to judge its effectiveness.

14. Staff at Oakfield have been involved in the self-assessment process, however, learners, employers and subcontractors were not consulted. Inspectors gave the same grades as those given in the self-assessment report. Inspectors found additional strengths and weaknesses to those in the report. The self-assessment report is not linked to the business plan. A development plan exists which identifies actions related to the recent self-assessment process and progress is monitored. Although the self-assessment process is very new, there is evidence that it is being used to plan improvements.

<b>Poor Practice</b>
----------------------

<i>At the work placement, inappropriate images are displayed in a public place.</i>
---

## AREAS OF LEARNING

### Foundation programmes

**Grade 4**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Life Skills	22	4

15. There are 22 learners on Life Skills learning programmes. Eleven learners are enrolled on the Oakfield Training programme, which focuses on motor vehicles. Eleven learners are enrolled the WETA training programme which provides a range of vocational areas to young people. Training in WETA is provided by subcontractors, supplemented by additional support by other specialist providers. All learners agree an individual learning plan. Off-the-job training is co-ordinated within Oakfield Training by the post-16 manager. Learners are trained and supported by four full-time staff and one part-time literacy and numeracy tutor. On the WETA programmes, training is co-ordinated by the subcontracted Life Skills providers, supported by the post-16 manager. Learners work a minimum of 16 hours each week in work placements or at the training centres, for a total of 19 weeks. This can, however, be extended if necessary. All learners are referred through Connexions. On referral, Oakfield receives basic information about the learners. All learners on the Oakfield learning programme complete an initial assessment within the first two weeks. Learners on WETA training programmes also complete this assessment, either through the subcontractor's arrangements or through Oakfield's literacy tutor. Individual learning plans are agreed after staff observation of the learners within four weeks of the start of the Life Skills learning programmes. The individual learning plan is reviewed with learners every four weeks.

The following table shows the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of the inspection.

Work-based learning for young people																
Life Skills																
	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01											
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	32		19		7											
Retained*	4		17	89	6	86										
Successfully completed	0		13	68	6	86										
Still in learning	22		0	0	0	0										

\*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

**STRENGTHS**

- good retention rates
- good pastoral support for learners
- good range of learning activities

**WEAKNESSES**

- insufficient links between vocational training and literacy and numeracy support
- inadequate assessment
- poor planning of learning

**OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

- more accreditation of learning

16. Retention rates are good. The retention rates for 2000-01 and 2001-02 are 86 per cent and 89 per cent, respectively. The retention rates are showing a slow upward trend. The number of learners recruited onto the training programmes has increased by approximately 60 per cent since 2000-01. Learners are initially recruited to a 19-week training programme. If needed, extensions are given. These retention rates are some of the highest within local comparisons made recently by the LSC.

17. There is good pastoral support for learners. Staff provide learners with good care and attention to their individual support and learning needs. Learners are able to talk to staff openly and discuss any issues. In some cases, staff visit learners in their own homes. They maintain regular contact with learners to ensure they are retained on the training programme. Staff speak to parents regularly and work closely with partner agencies to support learners. Help to find housing for some learners is provided. Counselling services are brought in to help some learners. Some individuals are taken to job interviews. Help with bus fares or with protective clothing is given. Two learners who would otherwise have left the training programme were assigned helper roles within Oakfield to improve their self-esteem. They were given individual mentors and staff are helping to support them. There is good celebration of success within Oakfield. The learner who has progressed the most each month is awarded a certificate of achievement as well as a £20 cash bonus. A learner at one subcontractor was recently encouraged to write articles that were published in the magazine produced for the project. Free sessions in the fitness suite of the local leisure centre are also negotiated for learners who show good timekeeping.

18. There is a good range of learning activities, which are well matched to the needs

and aspirations of most learners. For example, one learner who was on the point of leaving the training programme was matched to a newly sourced subcontractor who trains learners in the music industry. This change suited the learners interests of guitar-playing and working with computers. Additional qualifications offered by some subcontractors are matched to the needs of the learners. At one subcontractor, learners are offered appropriate qualifications such as first aid and are also encouraged to progress towards specific qualifications such as chainsaw operating. Outward-bound courses are also available for those learners on the parks and countryside work placements. These learning activities are not offered to all learners by Oakfield. In some cases, training is supplemented by a range of guest speakers such as drug awareness specialists or contributions from specialist partners.

19. There are insufficient links between vocational training and the literacy and numeracy learner support. Vocational training is provided separately from the literacy and numeracy skills training. For example, in one learning session, the motor vehicle training involved the use of fractions and requiring learners to understand temperature readings. There was no joint planning or schemes of work to show the development of skills across the vocational area in relation to this aspect of numeracy. Some learners did not fully understand some of the numeracy issues and the trainer did not provide adequate explanations. Staff meet and discuss learners' needs, but these discussions are not yet used to improve the training or better meet the learners needs. At some subcontractors, an outside support agency is used to teach literacy and numeracy training. Although there is some informal discussion about the content of the learning programmes, there is no joint planning to effectively integrate literacy and numeracy skills with the rest of the provision. Resources are not routinely shared between vocational trainers and literacy and numeracy tutors who are not included in the curriculum meetings. Resources in specialist vocational areas are not always adequate for the needs of some learners, particularly in relation to literacy and numeracy. Attendance by learners at the support sessions for literacy and numeracy is voluntary and learners do not regard these sessions as an important part of their learning programmes. Overall attendance at these sessions is poor, with many learners not attending regularly. At one subcontractor, literacy and numeracy is provided as part of the learners' overall learning programme and some good practice is being developed.

20. Assessment is inadequate. Initial assessment results are not used to develop individual learning plans. Subsequent assessments comprise learners' daily evaluative sheets and a weekly personal progress review. No formative or final assessments are available. In the vocational areas, no appropriate vocational assessments are carried out. There are no clear measures to indicate when learners have achieved or understood their training. Monthly reviews by Oakfield staff are carried out, but these generally involve self-assessment by the learner with no further in-depth assessment of knowledge and understanding. No assessment tools are used to measure progress and there is no process in place to ensure consistency in assessment decisions. The literacy and numeracy tutor is unaware of the range of assessment tools available or of relevant national training initiatives. Two subcontractors have some well-produced and well-designed assessment materials and these are used effectively with some learners.



21. There is poor planning of learning. All learners have individual learning plans and these record some targets relating to personal development, confidence building and self-esteem. However, many targets are too general and progress cannot be monitored adequately. Literacy and numeracy targets are not included for many learners or are recorded in insufficient detail. Learners are not fully involved in planning and agreeing of their learning programme. In many cases, planning is done by the tutor for the learner. There is not enough discussion between the tutor and the learner beyond the initial agreement of the individual learning plan. Most learners are not aware of their targets or where they are aiming with their learning. The component parts of the training processes are not adequately linked. Not all parties are sufficiently involved in agreeing a way forward which best suits the learner. Some employers are not aware of any off-the-job training being done. Subcontractors, support agencies and Oakfield are not involved in the joint planning of training. Some subcontractors have separate planning and recording procedures in place as well as the systems required by Oakfield. Progress reviews are regular, but concentrate on the reporting of achievements, which are not internally or externally verified, and demanding, achievable targets are not set. Learners carry out similar progress reviews at the subcontractors, which are a duplication of the Oakfield review system.